

Finchampstead Parish Circular Walk 1 - St James' Church

Approx. 3.2 miles / 5 km. The route is signed with waymarkers – see the image below.



Start at the Parish Council noticeboard next to the triangular green **1** opposite the Queens Oak Public House. You can generally park in the Church car park (except on Sunday) but if you are with a large group please check in advance with the Church Office (0118 9730133) to see if any events are taking place.

Follow the sign posted footpath up the road towards St James's Church and take the right fork keeping the high brick wall on your left **2**.

Continue past White Horse Cottages on your left and follow the footpath as it drops down past Manor Beacon House to go through a kissing gate and over a private drive. The path continues between hedges, with views to the left over fields to Finchampstead village.

After a short time you will come to a crossing of two footpaths. Continue straight ahead through the gap in the fencing. The path continues through mixed hedgerows and trees **3** and has a number of wicket gates into the neighbouring fields – these are for private use only and there is no public access. On your left in the distance is a pond with an artificial heron.

Soon you will come to the small Eft Moor plantation on your right behind a wire fence. On the left are fields full of horses with a small barn/stable. Continue along the path passing a tall evergreen hedge on your right until you come to a stile and cross the private drive signed to Primrose Cottage, Wheatlands Manor, Little Wheatland and Wheatland House. Pass through the gateway opposite and the path opens out with fields on the right and mixed woodland planting to the left. Banisters Farm and Cottages can be seen on your right.

At the end of the path go through the kissing gate onto Fleet Hill and keep on the right hand verge down the hill past the entrance to Banisters House and South Lodge. Opposite Fleet Hill Cottage cross the road with care and take the signposted tarmac footpath with Vann House on your right. The path now forms part of the Blackwater Valley Path and goes

between pleasant houses and paddocks full of horses, passing a small pond on the left and eventually coming to the gate of Fleet Hill Farm.

Go through the gap to the left of the large automatic gate, across the farmyard (dogs on leads please) and continue along the path with more paddocks on your right and Fleet Copse on the left. The path bends left and widens out with views to the right across land being restored as a Nature Reserve and for public amenity after years of gravel extraction. 4.

After about 400 yards you will go through a kissing gate and come to a T junction. Turn left and follow the footpath (No 33) through a wooded area, passing the former Alpaca Stud on your right.

You are now coming into Finchampstead village and the route soon turns sharply left along a narrow footpath behind a row of houses following a wooden fence on its right – the footpath sign is somewhat hidden by a holly bush 5. It is however well worth going on for a few yards to see a commemorative signpost carved from an old Yew tree, which marks the spot where King Henry VIII first learned of the arrival in the area of his future Queen Catherine of Aragon.

The route continues up the slope with the wooden fence on your right and the path ends next to a garage and the village shop. The road here is called “The Village” and immediately opposite is the Memorial Hall and Sports Club 6. Cross with care and go into the car park then turn immediately right along the hedge around the Tennis court and walk along the edge of the park past the football fields and children’s playground until you reach the end where a footpath (No 9) runs across at right angles.

The main route turns left along the footpath, past a bench installed by the Parish Council to commemorate the Silver Jubilee in 1977, and goes up the hill 7 to the gate to St James’s churchyard.

An optional detour is to turn right and follow the path to rejoin the road (The Village) and then walk along the footpath on the opposite side for about a quarter of a mile up the hill to the Finchampstead ‘Way-Side Cross’ War Memorial 8. There are excellent views on a clear day across the Blackwater Valley and into Hampshire. Retrace your steps to rejoin the main walk on footpath No 9.

To return to the start of the walk you can either go up past the Church 9, and bear right down the road, or alternatively explore the church yard and leave through the lower gate almost opposite the Parish Council noticeboard.

At the end of your walk you may visit the Queen's Oak Public House **10**, formerly known as the White Horse.

This walk can of course be done in the reverse direction and extra waymarkers have been added to assist with this.



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